Regional NIAGARA

Tourism.....
In The Niagara Region

Report No. 3

Some Tourist Attractions - Present and Possible

Planning and Development Department

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Memo to: Planning and Development Committee

From: Planning Staff

Re: "Some Tourist Attractions - Present and Possible"
- A Summary

The first two reports in the "Tourism In Niagara" series have dealt with the tourism market and with emerging population, economic, social, and attitudinal trends as they affect tourism. These reports are being prepared in conjunction with a subcommittee of the Region Niagara Tourist Council.

To allow for participation and contribution, the tourism study is being released in a series of reports or chapters rather than as one volume. This is Chapter 3 in the five chapter study, and staff are particularly looking for feedback on this chapter as suggestions for the final report on "The Way Ahead".

Several important conclusions appeared from the earlier reports, including:

- the shorter length of stay of visitors to Niagara when compared to other tourism destinations,
- the increasing interest in mini-vacations and weekend trips,
- the increased interest in vacations focused on special types of activities.

From the above perspective, this third report looks at three aspects of the tourism scene in Niagara. These are:

- the types of things which visitors can do in Niagara, which could help to lengthen their stay in this area.
- perspectives of tourist operators in Niagara regarding developments in the tourism industry in this area,
- some suggestions as to where we might go from here in terms of developing new activities for tourists, and in promotion.

Some of the main points from each section are briefly noted below:

THE EXISTING TOURISM LANDSCAPE

There is a variety of interesting and exciting tourism attractions in Niagara. Amongst these are:

Historical attractions	- communities, buildings, forts, museums, the Old Welland Canals, places related to the War of 1812.
The Natural Environment	- lakes, rivers, waterfalls, conservation areas, the Niagara Escarpment, fish and wildlife areas, bird watching.
Niagara's Farmlands	- Farm Vacations, Bed and Breakfast, Winery tours, Festivals (e.g. The Niagara Grape and Wine Festival), Blossom and Flower Shows, Fruits and Vegetables.
Outdoor Recreation	- e.g. golf courses, fishing, marinas, boat rentals, hiking trails, camping, sporting activities.
Amusement Centres	- the various attractions in Niagara Falls, waterslides, Speedways, etc.
Scenic Drives	- the Niagara Parkway, the Talbot Trails, "Blossom Route", Regional Road 81, the Fonthill Kame area.
Cultural Interests	- Niagara's population contains many ethnic groups which celebrate their heritage in various festivals.
Theatre/Fine Arts	- the Shaw Festival and other artistic and theatrical events.
Shopping	- Visitors can enjoy a wide variety of shopping in the Region.
Business and Convention Centres	- various facilities exist in Niagara which are excellent for conventions and specialized meetings.

An important part of this report is a map indicating the different types of attractions that can be enjoyed in this area.

NIAGARA TOURIST OPERATORS' VIEWPOINTS

During July 1983, a questionnaire was sent to some tourist operators in Niagara to identify their veiwpoints on the tourism industry. Their opinions on "Major Tourist Markets","Trends in tourism in Niagara", and on "Promotional/Marketing Ideas" are presented in the report. Amongst the major conclusions are:

The Major Tourist Market is within one day's drive of Niagara. Much of the day-trip business were people stopping on the way North. Groups that were suggested as having the potential for increased numbers of visitors were senior citizens and U.S. visitors, although singles and young families were also viewed as important market segments.

The Trends in Tourism In Niagara which were identified by tourist operators included some which appeared in the second report. This confirms that some of the more general types of tourism features are indeed appearing in the Niagara market. These are not elaborated on here but can be examined on pages 10 to 12 of the main report.

The Promotional/Marketing Ideas proposed by the operators confirmed the importance of this aspect. Regional promotion, the obtaining of a higher profile for tourism, a variety of marketing approaches, and the development of new attractions were all identified as important elements of an extended program. The detailed suggestions are outlined on pages 12 to 14 of the report.

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

In considering the suggestions made by the tourist operators, and the types of opportunities which exist in Niagara, a number of ideas appeared as possibilities for the future expansion of the industry. Some of these are:

Activities

- Improvement of the Old Welland Canals system, and the development of related attractions;
- Improve the water quality especially along the Lake Ontario shoreline and in the Niagara River;
- Promote the historical aspects of the Region as the basis for short trips;
- Encourage people to tour the rural parts of the Region;
- Develop a circular tour route using the Niagara Parkway, the Lakeshore route along Lake Ontario, the improved Welland Canal corridor, and the Talbot Trail;
- Develop the garden image of the Region-i.e. the Garden City, the Rose City, the Niagara Falls and Parkway Gardens - as a basis for attracting tourists. Consider for example Ottawa's Tulip Festival.

Promotion

- Consider a Regional theme song or advertising message as a promotional device;
- Promote Niagara as a family vacation area, i.e. consider a high promotional emphasis on the collection of tourist experiences that can be enjoyed in the area.
- Expand the services of the Tourist Information Centres by showing slides on what can be done in the Region, providing accommodation booking services, arranging winery tours, etc.

More information on the suggestions is included in the final section of the report.

Conclusions

This report has identified some types of attractions which exist in Niagara and has made some suggestions as to future ideas for the expansion of the tourism industry in this area. The ideas were developed in the context of the information and trends identified in the previous two reports, and from the perspective of the tourism operators as outlined in this report. The ideas are simply that - ideas - which are presented for discussion and consideration, with the intent of developing a higher profile for this very important segment of the Regional economy. Planning staff welcome input, comments, and any suggestions which people may have on the outlined ideas, particularly in relation to the preparation of the final report on "The Way Ahead".

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"SOME TOURIST ATTRACTIONS-PRESENT AND POSSIBLE"

March 1984

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Section 1

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two reports in the "Tourism In Niagara" series dealt with the tourism market and with emerging population, economic, social, and attitudinal trends as they affect tourism. Several important elements of the existing tourism market have emerged, particularly:

- the shorter length of stay of visitors to Niagara when compared to other tourism destinations,
- the increasing interest in mini-vacations and weekend trips,
- the increased interest in vacations focused on special types of activities.

In considering these developments, the question arose as to what possibilities exist in Niagara to lengthen the stay of visitors, and to provide a set of attractions which could serve as interests in themselves while at the same time complementing other types of facilities. A number of such attractions exist in this area and it was thought useful to present them in one place to demonstrate the variety of holiday experiences which can be enjoyed in Niagara. Obviously the overview focuses on types of activities rather than on individual operations but from a promotional perspective if more people come to the area, then individual tourist attractions will benefit.

The first part of this report therefore contains an overview of the tourism landscape in Niagara.

The second part presents some perspectives of tourism operators in this area on important aspects of the tourism situation. These impressions were obtained in response to a letter, with some questions, that was sent to a substantial number of tourist operators in Niagara.

The last section looks at some ideas for improving the local tourism scene. It is emphasized that these ideas are presented for discussion. Probably not all of them will be considered to be useful but hopefully they will stimulate discussion on possible new initiatives to develop this important segment of the Regional economy. Feedback and comments on the ideas could be very helpful in preparing the final report - "The Way Ahead".

Section 2

THE EXISTING TOURISM LANDSCAPE

2. THE EXISTING TOURISM LANDSCAPE

Niagara, when you consider it, has much to offer the tourist. Thus it is quite possible for tourists to visit the area for longer than one day, and to enjoy different types of activities. In the following section, some types of attractions are outlined, so that a composite picture of what we have to offer can be obtained. This composite picture is in fact schematically shown in the map which is enclosed in this report, and no doubt other items could be added.

A History

Niagara has a bountiful supply of historically-related features which can be used to encourage day-trips, as the basis for historical interest tours, or as attractions which add another dimension to a trip to Niagara. Some historical items are listed below.

Historical Communities

Niagara has a number of communities which represent various features from the area's history. Niagara-on-the-Lake, the first capital of Upper Canada has many historical buildings and Port Dalhousie in St. Catharines has some restored buildings and a historical Carousel. The Canal front area in Port Colborne and St. John's Pelham are two other communities with buildings showing features of early life in this area.

Historical Buildings

There are many buildings with historical interest in the Region. For example, McFarland House on the Niagara Parkway is a Georgian style home built in 1800, the Old Town Hall in St. Catharines was built in 1848 and later used as a Courthouse, the Laura Secord Homestead in Queenston has been restored to its state in the early 1800's, Welland Courthouse was designed in the 1800's, Morningstar Mill and the remains of Decew House show features of 19th century life in Thorold, the Railroad Museum and the Ridgeway Battlefields Hospital in Fort Erie respectively show historical railroad items and commemorate the Fenian raids of the 1860's, and Forts George and Erie are reconstructed forts representing the British occupation (1796-1813).

The Old Welland Canals

The first Canal opened in 1829, the second Canal in 1845, the third Canal in 1887, and the present Canal in 1932. The Welland By-pass was completed in 1973. The Welland Feeder Canal, in Welland and Wainfleet, was completed in 1829. The history of the Canals is shown in various publications.

The War of 1812

Amongst the features associated with the War of 1812 are the forts, Fort Mississauga, Fort George and Fort Erie, the Battles of Chippawa, Beaverdams, and Queenston Heights, DeCew House, and the Laura Secord House. Information on these facilities is readily available and most can be easily visited.

Tourism Themes In Museums in the Niagara Region

THEME	Museum/Park
War of 1812	- Laura Secord Homestead, Queenston - Niagara Historical Museum, Niagara-on-the-Lake - Stone Shop Museum, Grimsby - McFarland House, Niagara-on-the-Lake - Brock Monument National Historic Site, Niagara-on-the-Lake - Fort George National Historic Park, Niagara-on-the-Lake
History of Local Areas	
Pioneer Settlements in the Niagara Region	- Balls Falls Historic Site, Jordan - Fort Erie Historical Museum
Artifacts Reminiscent of early days	- Jordan Historical Museum - Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum - Lundy's Lane Historical Museum, Niagara Falls
Early Transportation in the Niagara Region	
Welland Canal	- Welland Historical Museum - St. Catharines Historical Museum
Railroad	- Fort Erie Historical Museum

Agriculture	- Morningstar Mill, Mountain Mills Museum
	- Willoughby Township Historical Museum
Specialty Museums	- Mildred M. Mahoney's Silver Jubilee Dolls
	- Niagara Apothecary
	- Niagara Fire Museum
	- Ridgeway Battlefield Hospital Museum, Fort Erie

B The Natural Environment

In addition to Niagara Falls, Niagara has a variety of natural environmental attractions. A few resources and related activities are briefly outlined below to serve as examples.

Water Resources

The waters in Niagara are used for recreation, transportation and navigation. For instance, the Welland Canal, linking Lakes Erie and Ontario, is part of a continental transportation network and earlier stages of development are still visible. Along parts of the canals there are pleasant walking routes and relaxing picnic areas, and tourists may view ships from around the world at various observation points. Henley Regatta, the most famous rowing event in Canada, is held annually on Martindale Pond, the entrance to the Old Canals.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are found throughout Niagara. In these areas, the aims are to encourage the wise use and development of forestry, wildlife, water, land, heritage, and recreational resources. All of the Conservation Areas have some recreational or cultural attractions, such as camping, swimming, boating, and nature trips. Some Conservation Areas provide educational demonstrations, and a major arts and crafts fair is held at Ball's Falls each Thanksgiving weekend.

The Niagara Escarpment

The Niagara Escarpment is accessible along virtually its entire 50 mile length in Niagara. Tourists may view various flora or fauna or visit private and public parks along the Escarpment, as well as campgrounds, waterfalls, and scenic drives. The Bruce Trail, Ontario's oldest and longest trail, runs along the Escarpment inviting tourists to take short or long hikes.

Fish and Wildlife Areas

The Region is located on the migration routes of many birds and some areas contain rare flora and fauna species. Some of these areas already attract substantial numbers of naturalists in the summer and in the shoulder seasons.

C Niagara's Farmlands

Niagara is famous for its fruitlands, which produce about three quarters of Ontario's tender fruit. The southern part of the Region has a more general agricultural economy including cash cropping, dairying, and intensive livestock operations. As suggested below, there are several ways in which the agricultural economy can be integrated with tourism.

Farm Vacations/Bed and Breakfast

Farm Vacations and "Bed and Breakfast" facilities can cater to those interested in having a relaxing vacation in the countryside. The intent of the farm vacation is to allow city dwellers and others to see a functional farm in operation. Although there are several farms in Niagara which offer this type of holiday, correspondence received from Ontario Vacation Farm Association indicates that they would welcome additions to the current list of facilities (see Appendix 1). In addition bed and breakfast facilities can offer friendly personalized service at an economical price, and provide an alternative to other forms of accommodation.

Wineries

Niagara's vineyards produce about 45 varieties of grapes, ranging from the traditional Niagara and Concord varieties to the more recently introduced European Vinifera and French hybrids. The area is famous for its fine wines with ten wineries being located in the Region, six of which provide tours.

Fresh juices are also becoming increasingly popular, and several operations offer a variety of juices from local produce.

Festivals Related to Agriculture

Cities within Niagara host several festivals related to the area's agricultural heritage, the main ones being the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival and the Welland Rose Festival.

The Niagara Grape and Wine Festival includes ten days of wine and cheese parties, athletic events, ethnic concerts, and a Grand Parade.

The Welland Rose Festival is a two-week event celebrating Welland's renowned roses. In this festival, there are rose shows to judge the finest bloom, the Rose Queen Contest, parades, boat races, aquatic shows, and coronation balls.

Fall Fairs

Fall Fairs are an important part of the agricultural scene in Niagara with many communities hosting these events. Activities include traditional farm-related activities such as competitions for produce, jams and breads, arts and crafts, funfairs, horse riding and various other forms of entertainment.

Blossom/Flower Shows

In the Spring, especially in May, the fruit orchards are in full bloom, making the "Blossom Route" one of the most scenic drives in Southern Ontario. The colours of the blossoms vary from one fruit variety to another.

The Flower Shows held in Niagara Parks Greenhouse also attract tourists. In 1982, 400,000 people visited the Flower Shows, coming from as far away as Toronto, New York State, and Pennsylvania.

The Stoke's Seeds Trial Garden is a related feature which has over 3,000 trial varieties of both flowers and vegetables. Their season is from June to September.

Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables can be obtained from pick-your-own operations or from the many roadside stands in the area. Farmers' markets are held in various municipalities.

D Outdoor Recreation

Niagara has a variety of outdoor recreational facilities such as golf courses, fishing areas, marinas and boat rentals, hiking trails, and camping. The following are some of the opportunities.

Golf Gourses are distributed throughout Niagara as follows:

Fort Erie	(4)
Lincoln	(1)
Niagara Falls	(7)
Niagara-on-the-Lake	(3)
Pelham	(3)
Port Colborne	(1)
St. Catharines	(2)
Thorold	(1)
Welland	(2)
Wainfleet	(2)

Recreational Fishing in the Niagara Region is easily accessible in most lakes, rivers and ponds. Sport fishing is encouraged. Species of fish in Niagara's waters include pike, yellow pickerel, largemouth and smallmouth bass, muskellunge, brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, lake trout and splake and sturgeon. A salmon derby is also held each April in Lake Ontario.

Marinas are found along the lakeshores in the Region.

The Bruce Trail, along the Niagara Escarpment, provides a scenic and challenging walk along a clearly marked trail.

Niagara Glen Nature Area, a system of trails allows people to explore the fascinating biology and geology of the Niagara gorge.

There are excellent camping facilities in Niagara, which allows people to stay near the tourist attractions.

A variety of sporting events can also be enjoyed including professional hockey, horseracing, rowing, and the well-known Skylon marathon.

E Amusement Centres

Niagara hosts many amusement centres which accommodate the family market. These include animal and game farms, scenic tunnels, boat trips, observation towers, waterslides, Speedways, and a variety of rides. These facilities provide thrills and excitement, and are an important part of the family tourism attractions.

F Scenic Drives

Scenic drives provide more leisurely and often more attractive routes than major highways. They also allow people to go more slowly, stop more often, and generally get a clearer perspective of the area and its communities.

In Niagara there are several scenic routes, even though much of the area has roads which pass through attractive areas.

The Niagara Parkway Scenic Drive along the Niagara River is internationally famous.

The Talbot Trail from Fort Erie to Windsor crosses the southern part of the Region,

The Scenic Drive in the northern part of the Peninsula is an attractive route especially in blossom season.

Regional Road 81 crosses the area close to the Escarpment. In addition to providing a scenic alternative to the Queen Elizabeth Way, it allows visitors to stop and see the communities through which it passes, as well as buying fruit and vegetables from the numerous roadside stands along its way.

The Fonthill Kame is another very scenic area especially in the Fall and is easily accessible from Highway 20.

G Cultural Interests

Niagara's population has a great ethnic diversity so that visitors from both Canada and abroad should feel at home in this area.

The Ethnic Mosaic is strongly represented in the annual Spring Folk Arts Festival in St. Catharines which began in May 1969 as a one day festival but by 1983 had grown to a 15 day celebration, with 35 Member groups. Throughout the Folk Arts Festival there are Open Houses, which are held at participating ethnic member group clubs. These include arts and crafts, folk dancing, singing and music, as well as dances, international buffets, steel band music and other events providing an interesting and colourful festival.

The Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, held in late September, also involves ethnic organizations in the area, with a major event being an Open Air Ethnic Concert with participants in their authentic costumes.

H. Theatre / Fine Arts

Niagara has a variety of theatrical and fine arts attractions, the best known of which is the Shaw Festival which draws a large number of visitors to the area. Other theatrical activities such as the Press Theatre, Garden City Productions, Carousel Players, and the Brock Centre for the Arts are well known in St. Catharines. The Firehall Theatre in Niagara Falls, the Niagara Falls Music Theatre Society, and the Niagara Falls Summer Youth Theatre Group are also important, and the Welland Little Theatre is well known in that City. Rodman Hall and the Niagara Symphony are other artistic attractions and there are of course many professional entertainers in the area.

The above activities and others provide opportunities for theatrical/artisitic enjoyment in Niagara and provide the basis for a specialized visit or as attractions which can supplement other types of interests.

I. Shopping

There are many shopping centres throughout the Region with each of the three major urban areas - St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, and Welland - having substantial shopping centres. These modern malls are complemented by central business districts and smaller shopping areas. In addition to this range of shopping areas, there is a variety of boutiques, arts and crafts stores, discount flea markets, and country auctions. Thus an interesting and enjoyable shopping experience can be had and can complement other activities in the Region.

J. Business and Convention Centres

The Business and Convention meetings market is different from the conventional tourism market in that it is related more to business than pleasure. However, the choice of a location for such meetings does depend on some of the same features as are looked for by tourists, and certainly the market has provided opportunities both for expanding tourism volumes and for extending the tourism season.

Three centres in the Region; St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, and Niagara-on-the-Lake, presently host business meetings and conventions. In St. Catharines there are seven "convention" hotels/motels and Brock University; in Niagara Falls there are eight major "convention" hotels/motels; and in Niagara-on-the-Lake there are two major "convention" hotels/motels. These facilities are all close together and could be used either individually or in conjunction with one another, depending on convention requirements. Also they are generally less expensive than equivalent accommodation in larger centres, particularly Toronto.

The facilities in the area also offer opportunities to host retreats, e.g. "Elderhostel" held each year at Brock University. The Elderhostel concept was inspired by the youth hostels and folk schools of Europe, but guided by the needs of older citizens for intellectual stimulation and physical adventure.

Another specialized facility is the Niagara Institute in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Institute is oriented to management-type training sessions and to reviews of current developments in business circles. This organization provides the opportunity for area businesses and outside agencies to keep up-to-date on current trends in a pleasant environment.

Section 3

NIAGARA TOURIST OPERATORS' VIEWPOINTS

3. NIAGARA TOURIST OPERATORS' VIEWPOINTS

As part of the review of the tourism industry, a letter with some questions was sent to a number of tourist operators in the Region. A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix 2. Also a meeting to discuss the issues was convened by the Region Niagara Tourist Council. About 25 replies were received from the circulation of the questionnaire, and the following are the major conclusions from the replies and from the meeting.

Major Tourist Markets

The major market is within one day's drive of Niagara, which is about 300-400 miles. With respect to types of market, these varied depending on the type of attraction. For example, the suggestion was that day-trippers were important for the entertainment types of facilities, whereas senior citizens were more important for some of the dining establishments. Much of the day-trip business were people stopping in the area before moving on northwards. The major suggested potential groups which could be attracted in greater numbers are U.S. visitors (because of the exchange rate) and senior citizens. However, singles and young families were also viewed as important market segments. Another suggestion was that more off-season visitors could be expected because of the traffic congestion during the peak mid-summer season.

Trends in Tourism in Niagara

The major comments made by tourist operators on emerging trends are as follows:

a) There appears to be more week-end trippers, some of whom have decided to take a number of short holidays rather than going South. The package vacation is another major market segment which tends to increase the length of stay in Niagara. Motorcoach travel is perceived to have increased in importance, although travel by car is still dominant. Weekend packages, tour packages, and conventions were suggested as likely possibilities to attract more tourists.

b) Today's tourists are more sophisticated and demanding. They are looking for value for money and for friendly, knowledgeable staff in the tourist operations. The importance of receiving a warm welcome was stressed. Since there is more competition for the tourist dollar than previously, the viewpoint was presented that there is a need to attract <u>every</u> market segment using <u>all</u> marketing techniques.

c) There appears to be fewer long-distance travellers from such places as California and the south-western U.S. People are vacationing closer to home, staying longer in one place, and demanding more fully-serviced facilities. Short distance travellers were perceived to be staying at one place and travelling around from there. Access to swimming was perceived to be very important.

d) People seem to be somewhat more cost-conscious now. For example, hotel/motel/cottage travellers are interested in more self-contained facilities. Large families are demanding efficiency units. Another suggestion was that there is less interest in expensive fine dining and more interest in inexpensive fast foods, less interest in expensive entertainment and more interest towards inexpensive family-style entertainment (perceived good value).

e) Seniors and "empty-nesters" are perceived as significant groups, which, through special interest and weekend packages and special events, offer potential for expansion, especially in the shoulder seasons. Family travel was perceived as becoming less important, and the single child family and the couple alone will likely demand higher quality service.

f) There appears to be an increase in the number of people camping. These patrons demand a variety of facilities ranging from fully-serviced sites to partially-serviced sites to primitive sites. An increase was noted in the number of people camping outside the urban areas and commuting in. Two trends were mentioned in terms of types of camping, one being towards more recreational vehicles and campers, the other being towards the use of smaller and lighter equipment. It may be that the motor homes are being parked in one area for longer which could explain the apparent increase in their numbers.

g) Theme parks were viewed as positive features of the tourist landscape in that they both attract people to an area and keep tourists longer. However, it was noted that theme parks will need to regularly update their facilities to obtain repeat business.

h) It was indicated that tourists had a preference for home-based day events which were relatively passive and low cost. There is a demand for package deals which include room, food, tours, and attractions. Again, two different viewpoints were expressed about types of attractions that were preferred. One is that there appeared to be less interest in "Coney Island" type of attractions, and more interest in history and natural resources. The other is that tourist attractions should develop a more "Disney-esque" image to compete -- i.e., there is a need for more spectacles, thrills, and activities.

i) There was a perceived demand for parks catering to the local population, especially parks with beaches. Demand was noted for larger units which can handle larger groups. It was also stated that cleanliness and natural beauty are important attributes of a tourist area, and maintaining and improving the natural beauty of the area were viewed as important.

j) The issue of costs was raised a number of times. For example, one respondent noted that because of local rates, people are frequently one night visitors. As well it was noted that fair exchange rates should be given on U.S. funds, and that less expensive accommodation, better and cleaner rooms, and less expensive meals could all improve the tourist potential of the area. Furthermore, a decrease in admission costs to facilities was noted as a suggested idea.

Promotional/Marketing Ideas

A large number of suggestions was made as to promotional/marketing ideas. Some of the major suggestions are itemized below:

- Get visitors to Niagara Falls out and about the Region. Each community should have a map of its tourist attractions generally available. More promotion of outlying areas and smaller attractions would help in getting visitors to travel more widely in this area.

- Regional marketing has come of age. Increased Regional involvement and, in particular, heavier Regional promotion within an 80-mile radius would strengthen the industry. The suggestion was that people should be encouraged to take more frequent short trips.

- As part of the development of a Regional viewpoint, the production of a master plan for tourism in Niagara was suggested.

- It was suggested that a successful marketing program would have the following three parts:

  . tour packages stressing value, activity, and variety;

  . single event and activity promotions;

  . direct marketing to specific segments of the market.

- Increased advertisements and continued effective marketing, especially in the U.S., should increase the number of tourists to Niagara.

- Niagara should become an Official Destination Area in its own right, rather than simply being another part of Festival Country.

- There is a need to educate both local governments and the public about the importance of tourism.

- Special bussing arrangements should be made in Niagara Falls so that people can leave their cars in one spot and get taken around the major attractions.

- A variety of marketing approaches should be adopted - e.g., tour packages for senior citizens and foreign visitors, single event and activity promotions for singles and young families. Tour packages, activity promotion, tournaments, and seminars were suggested activities that would benefit the tourism industry.

- As a specific suggestion it was proposed that the tourism potential of the Welland Canal should be further developed. Other ideas which were proposed were:

- A wine centre;
- Development of the arts -- both high-brow and lighter, popular entertainment (e.g., country music);
- Development of the "People Mover" system in Niagara Falls.
- Greater co-operation within the industry in terms of tourism development and marketing.
- Development of educational programs for the industry.

In short, the responses to the questionnaire suggested specific ideas related to tourism development and increased marketing and promotional efforts.

Section 4

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

4. IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

This report has identified some tourist-related themes which exist in Niagara, and has presented some viewpoints of tourist operators. Some ideas for the future are suggested in this section with the suggestions being grouped into two categories -- activities, and promotion. The suggestions are presented as ideas for discussion on possible initiatives to expand tourism in Niagara.

ACTIVITIES

Welland Canals

1. Given the increased interest in physical activities and the established tourist attraction of the Welland Canals, the completion of the Merritt Trail along the historic canals and subsequent development of a related Regional recreational/parks system should be given high priority. The potential of the Feeder Canal and the possible integration of that system into a walking/biking/parks network connected with the Merritt Trail should also be considered.

The Old Welland Canal has great potential as a recreational resource. Once the bicycle/walkway has been established, an annual Merritt Trail "End to End" hike could be held. Wind gliding and waterskiing activities could be held on the Old Welland Canal in Welland. In St. Catharines, although Highway 406 has reduced the potential in part of the area, there is still substantial opportunity to develop an attractive parks system along much of the Twelve Mile Creek. This would be clearly visible from Highway 406 and, if augmented by special attractions such as Sunday afternoon concerts, swimming areas, snowmobiling in winter, and special displays, could attract quite a few people. Finally if it is possible to clean up the water and to develop some functional locks along the Third Welland Canal, this would produce another interesting recreational feature.

2. Although there are Observation areas along the Canal, there is no opportunity to experience going through the locks. As a possible idea, a half-day boat trip through a couple of locks would provide an interesting opportunity to observe the Canal from a boat. Canal fees, time schedules, etc. might have to be considered to allow this to occur but if the idea was feasible it might be possible to work out an arrangement.

Swimming

3. Niagara has some excellent beaches along Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, and the Niagara River is also a very scenic water

resource. However, the quality of these water bodies is generally accepted as not being good enough for swimming. Consequently, the opportunity of attracting families to the beaches, or to have people spend an extra day along the shorelines in the Region is missed. Given the large number of nearby city-dwellers who do visit Niagara and who might be looking for an extended escape from the City, the lack of swimming along the shorelines is a handicap and one which, if remedied, would very likely have major benefits for the tourist industry.

Another important water-based recreational activity is lake fishing. The famous salmon derby for example attracts many visitors. The possibilities would seem to exist for expanded recreational fishing on the lakes but this would likely involve the development of extra marinas and an expanded stocking and hatchery program.

Windsurfing is now an established and growing recreational acitivity. Establishments renting windsurfing equipment along the lakeshores would be possible if people perceived the water quality to be adequate.

Boat Trips

4. Toronto is only about 25 miles away across Lake Ontario. In the past, various boats had crossed the Lake between Toronto and Niagara-on-the Lake. Given the tourist opportunities in Niagara-on-the-Lake, an evening cruise from Toronto, with accommodation in a hotel in Niagara-on-the-Lake, shopping, and a performance at the Shaw Festival would seem to have potential, especially for weekend visits. Alternatively during the week, special day visits from Toronto incorporating the Shaw and shopping might be feasible.

As a further suggestion, a boat bus going between urban areas along the lakeshore might have possibilities. Thus connections between Toronto, Oakville, Hamilton and St. Catharines for example might provide an interesting and pleasant alternative to existing modes of transportation, especially if energy prices rise dramatically, and such a trip could in itself be an attraction.

Finally, boat connections between Buffalo and Crystal Beach could provide an added dimension to a day at the amusement park. The possibility exists of recreating travel modes from bygone eras by providing pleasant cruises along the lake.

Historical Items

5. Pierre Berton's books on the War of 1812 deal with events and places in Niagara. As a special interest tour, a trip to Niagara to view some of the key places might be an interesting day trip. For example "A Day in 1812" could include such features as a paddleboat trip, an 1812 meal, and a horse and buggy ride through scenic parts of the Region. The emphasis here is to combine such a trip in a package that could include a tour of forts, a trip to the theatre, and overnight accommodation.

Niagara Falls

6. As indicated in an earlier report people tend to stay a shorter time in Niagara than they do elsewhere while on holidays. One possibility to attempt to keep people longer would be the provision of concert entertainment in Niagara Falls. Basically a concert hall hosting top quality entertainers might attract many of the tourists, who might as a result, stay overnight. Obviously, given the nearby Convention Centre in Niagara Falls, New York and Hamilton Place, the idea would need to be investigated but it would seem to add another dimension to the Niagara Falls entertainment scene.

Alternatively, during the season in Niagara Falls a top-class circus would augment the existing attractions. Such an activity could keep people longer and might even attract more people into the area.

Little is done at present to inform or interest the millions of tourists about the rural areas of Niagara. Brochures outlining farm tours and other interesting aspects of the countryside - e.g. horseback riding - could be put in Information booths in Niagara Falls, so that some people could see and perhaps spend some time in the more rural parts of the Region. Perhaps tours could be organized starting in Niagara Falls. Also it is important that information be provided on the diversity in this area before people arrive, so that they can plan to spend several days here.

7. The idea of a circular tour operating from Niagara Falls seems to have potential. That tour would go along the parkway to Niagara-on-the-Lake, thence to St. Catharines, on to Welland and Port Colborne, along the Talbot Trail to Fort Erie. Stops en route to talk about or visit major sites and restaurants, would introduce visitors to the area and suggest places to which they might like to return. The route between St. Catharines and Port Colborne could follow the Canal if and when a continuous roadway is established along it. Also this could be a self-directed tour - e.g. following a map. Finally if a bicycle route could be established along the Canal, the circular route would be a good bicycle trip and could be the basis of an annual bicycle race.

Agricultural Areas

8. In the budget-conscious 1980's farm vacations and Bed and Breakfast places both seem to be gaining in popularity. As indicated in an attached letter (see Appendix 1) there is some interest in promoting farm vacations in this area and Bed and Breakfast in old farm houses might be quite popular. Because of the more intense work period associated with fruit farms, these types of activities might be more suited to the general agricultural areas of the Region. However, it appears as if these types of facilities do offer some potential for farmers to obtain some of the advantages of tourism.

9. Pick-Your-Own fruit is an activity that appeals to certain people. Much of the market for this activity no doubt is in Toronto and other large urban centres and the objective is to attract those people who wish to pick a substantial amount of fruit. The traditional tourist passing through the area is not likely to pick fruit so the advertising therefore must be highly focussed. Using those newspapers and radios focussed on ethnic groups who have had a tradition of fruit picking would seem to be a quite useful way of advertising the product.

10. One way of attracting people to pick fruit in Niagara would be to sponsor one or more weekend excursions bringing people to a particular station in Niagara. At that point, participating farmers could meet the train and take the pickers to their farms. Lunches could be provided either by the farmer or be brought with the people. Entertainment could also be provided on the train. Such a day excursion offers an opportunity for families to enjoy a pleasant day's trip and to obtain fresh fruit.

Farm tours would seem to have some tourism potential. For example some of the operators with numerous greenhouses in the Region might consider whether or not people might be interested in visiting their facilities, especially those producing flowers. Although climate control and disease prevention might be concerns from an extended visitor program, there might well be advantages from selling items at the end of the tour. Also farm tours of general farming operations might be interesting to city people and their children who often have little opportunity to see how their food is produced.

Municipal Enhancement

11. St. Catharines is known as "The Garden City", and Welland is called "The Rose City of Canada". Both cities with their "garden" themes could get together to produce a "garden" image that could attract tourists. Ottawa, for example, with its tulip festival, attracts large numbers of people. Nearby, of course, there is also the famous Niagara Falls Parks Commission gardens.

Both cities could extend the Garden themeboth to beautify the city and to attract tourists. The entrances to the cities are especially important in encouraging people to move off the major highways and in creating a first impression. In St. Catharines, for example, private companies, Service Clubs, the Historical Society, and other interested groups could be encouraged to plant flowers, or to sponsor flower plantings, around the major Q.E.W. intersections and at major points in the city. Also, if a walkway/parks system is developed along the Welland Canals, beautiful gardens would increase the attractiveness of the area.

As a related suggestion, the Region or area municipalities could sponsor competitions to beautify the cities, e.g., the best-kept street, the best-kept major highway. The intent is to beautify the area and encourage flowers to develop the "Garden City" image. The most beautiful intersection along the Q.E.W. in the Region would add a competitive element to the design and floral arrangements of the displays. Also beautification of the steep area behind St. Paul Street would present an attractive image to the large number of people who will be passing along Highway 406.

The Abandoned Garden City Raceway

12. Another possibility involves some use for the abandoned Garden City Raceway. That facility could be used to develop a tourist attraction and some possibilities that might be considered are a historical theme park, a wine centre, or perhaps some combination of group related activities. An historical railway linking a historical theme park to a ship going through the locks might be feasible. Anyhow the ideas are presented to stimulate discussion on possible uses for the abandoned facility.

Short Hills

13. Short Hills Park is neither fully developed recreationally nor is it very well known outside of the local area. If further developments were put in place in the Short Hills it might attract people from throughout the Province. Such suggestions might be a cross-country ski competition, an orientation meet, or cross-country running. If such an event was well publicized and became well known, it could attract quite a few people.

Scenic Drives

14. Scenic drives in Niagara are an important part of the area and an alternative to major highways such as the Q.E.W. Brochures showing the scenic drives in the Region should be prominently displayed to provide people with more relaxed alternatives to the Q.E.W.

Southern Part of Region

15. The Southern part of the Region has a number of attractions which might be further expanded on by an attractive ferry boat ride between different locations. For example, Long Beach Conservation Area, Sherkston Beaches, Crystal Beach, and Port Colborne all offer various tourist attractions. It would be possible to stay at one of those places and visit the others by an enjoyable boat ride. Other possibilities include tours of the lake, party tours, etc.

16. In Wainfleet at present there is a facility that teaches one how to parachute. Related activities such as gliding, ultralight airplanes, and aerobatic flying could be incorporated into a flight-related centre.

Another related activity is learning to fly. This is substantially more expensive in Europe than in North America largely due to differences in fuel costs. There might well be great potential in advertising learning-to-fly rates in European flying magazines.

Sports Events

17. Each year there is a number of sports events such as curling championships, hockey tournaments, skating competitions, and winter and summer games. Accommodation in the summer might be difficult to provide since the existing rooms are fairly full up. However winter activities offer possibilities to expand the tourism season. Niagara has good facilties to offer athletes, excellent accommodation and support services, and an interesting recreational environment in which competitors can enjoy various activities. This provides an opportunity for Niagara to attract a good share of winter sports events which would bring people to the area.

Conservation Areas

18. In some of the Conservation Areas inland fisheries may well be feasible though this would involve stocking and hatchery programs. Basically this would extend the type of fishing that has been developed in some conservation areas.

Improving Information on Existing Facilities

19. Another suggestion is to try to make existing facilities better known. The Vineland Research Centre, for example, has beautiful rhododendron gardens which are not very well known. Also, the signposting, for example, to Lock III of the Canal could be improved to make it better known.

Conventions, Business Meetings, Recreational Weekends

20. As indicated in Section 2 of this report, there are at least 17 hotels in the Northern part of the Region that offer business meetings and convention facilities. In addition there are other accommodation facilities and services that can also be used. Such a network offers considerable opportunity for the development of packaged attractions, and a co-ordinated approach emphasizing all of the services that exist might well have potential.

Niagara is a good location for conventions and business meetings. Advertisement and promotion of the area as a location for these types of meetings could strengthen that dimension of the tourist industry, and would be especially useful outside of the peak season.

Recreational weekend packages appear to have potential. For example, tennis or golf classes, combined with overnight accommodation, could provide an enjoyable escape from the city.

PROMOTION

1. In terms of a promotional campaign for Niagara, an important part of a promotional program is the development of a focused concept or image of tourism in this area. From this context, a theme song or advertising message would be developed and widely publicized. A competition should be considered to produce a regional advertisement that could be put out on radio and T.V. to emphasize the opportunities offered in Niagara.

2. Promote the area as a location for extended family vacations. Amongst the advantages of the area which could be emphasized are:

- Location close to Toronto and other centres in Southern Ontario, New York, and nearby States. This becomes especially important if energy costs rise;

- This type of vacation is an economical alternative to a touring holiday or to visits further away from home;

- Hospitable people experienced in providing tourist services;

- A variety of interesting and entertaining attractions, including:

  . economical accommodation - high quality campsites and hotels which are close to the various attractions,

  . Niagara Falls with its existing facilities,

  . opportunities for outdoor activities - 26 golf courses, and high quality marinas,

  . historical and cultural attractions: the Forts, the Welland Canals, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Shaw Festival, Museums,

  . beautiful countryside,particularly the Niagara Escarpment,provides opportunities for hiking, picnicking, camping, good views of Lake Ontario,

  . a variety of agricultural activities,

  . opportunity to spend a night or two or longer at a farm through the Farm Vacation programs, possibilities for "Pick-Your-Own fruits and vegetables.

3. Continue to promote the special interest possibilities in the Region. Some of these are already well-known but historical tours, agriculturally-based trips, trips to special events, etc. do offer possibilities for bringing people to the area.

4. Develop the major existing Tourist Information booths into Tourist Welcome Centres at major highway entrances to the Region. These would be facilities with a variety of tourist-related services -- e.g., washrooms, information on the different types of activities in the Region, slide shows on events and attractions, possibilities to book accommodation, etc. Such centres, if well signposted and in a prominent location at major entrances to the Region, would attract large numbers of tourists and would provide a hospitable introduction to the Region and its services.

Conclusion

This report has provided informaticn on the tourism landscape, the perspectives of tourist operators, and some ideas which might help to expand the tourism industry. The ideas are presented for discussion and consideration by the Tourist Council and by tourism operators, and hopefully that review will suggest the major outline for "The Way Ahead" which is the final report in the series.

APPENDICES

Memo 1017
Appendix 1
Pages 23 to 24

ONTARIO VACATION FARM ASSOCIATION

R.R. 2,
Vankleek Hill, Ont.
K0B 1R0

Mr. George Nicholson
Planning Department
Regional Municipality of Niagara
2201 St. Davids Road
P.O. Box 1042
Thorold Ontario
L2V 4T7

August 12, 1983

Dear Mr. Nicholson:

Thank you very much for your phone call requesting information about the Ontario Vacation Farm Association and the Tourism potential of agricultural regions.

As I mentioned to you on the telephone, our association is very interested in promoting the idea of farm vacations throughout Ontario, and particularly in the Niagara region, where we feel that the potential for future business to farmers as supplementary income is considerable but, as yet, untapped.

Although we have tried to promote the idea of farm vacations in the Niagara, we have only two farming members, one in Beamsville, and one in Fenwick, both of which are pleased with the program. However, we do feel that, for such an area, there could be more farms involved in the project, and there would be a very substantial benefit to be derived, by the farmers in the area, as well as merchants. We have turned down requests by travel groups asking for accommodation on farms in the Niagara area, because we have not been able to supply sufficient facilities.

The concept of farm vacations is based on the personal resources available on residential homes in a particular area. The vacation activities involve interpersonal interaction between farm hosts and their guests, and encourage education of the visitors about farming and its problems and challenges. We do not intend to compete on a commercial basis with any hotel or motel-type of accommodation. Indeed, most farms offer accommodation to only one or two families at a time. We appeal, rather, to those individuals who wish to become familiar with an area through personal experiences, rather than through the more convential tourist-type of facility.

If we can be of further service to you, please feel free to contact me. We wish to encourage the idea of agricultural tourism, and would like to be as supportive as possible. Thank you again for contacting me. I look forward to hearing the results of your

report, and would appreciate receiving any recommendations which you may make, or conclusions which you may reach.

Sincerely,

Samme Putzel,
Coordinator

Memo 1017
Apendix 2
Pages 25 to 26

Regional NIAGARA
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
The Regional Municipality of Niagara
2201 St. David's Road, P.O. Box 1042
Thorold, Ontario L2V 4T7
Telephone: (416) 685-1571

July 14, 1983
File: TO

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Regional Planning and Development Department presently is undertaking a tourism study. The study is examining the existing tourism industry and some emerging trends in tourism and travel patterns in order to gain some understanding of future tourism development potentials for Niagara. It is expected that the consequent series of reports will prove useful to all those involved in tourism - tourist operators, developers, and government.

We are now in the process of examining the portion of the study dealing with emerging and future trends in the tourist industry. Literature on this subject was reviewed. However, it was recognized that the personal insights of tourist operators, and those involved in the industry would be extremely helpful. The questions below have been circulated to many of the tourist operators in the Region for their comments and views. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from your involvement in the winery industry, especially winery tours, could assist us in our research. We realize that you may not have responses for some questions but any insights you do have would be helpful. To assist us it would be appreciated if you would write a very brief (1 or 2 pages) letter to us by August 8 using the general framework of questions below. Please set out any thoughts you may have regarding trends or patterns that you see emerging in the tourist industry.

. What trends do you see emerging in tourist travel patterns?

  - length of stay, distance travelled, means of travel, frequency of travel.

. What do you consider to be the major tourist markets for Niagara now and in the future? (e.g. Ontario, U.S., young families, singles, senior citizens)

. Do you anticipate an increase in the number of tourists in the Region?

- Are you aware of any changes in tastes, preferences, or expectations of tourists from their travel or tourism experience?

- What sorts of tourism marketing techniques do you think will be successful in the future - tour packages, single event or activity promotion, appeals to special segments of the market?

- Do you have any comments regarding the growth of theme parks such as Canada's Wonderland and Marineland, and their future tourist attractions?

- Do you foresee any other trends developing in the tourist industry generally or in Niagara in particular?

- Do you have any ideas regarding how the tourist industry in Niagara might be improved?

- Many surveys and questionnaires are conducted by individual tourist operators and associations in the area. Are you aware of any of these to which you may direct us or provide us with a copy?

It should be noted that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions raised here. It is your thoughts and ideas that most interest us. All comments will be treated confidentially and no response will be individually identified. In fact the intent is to aggregate and compile the data into organized patterns rather than to report the findings of individual operations. For your convenience, I have enclosed a self-addressed and stamped envelope in which to mail your response.

Let me thank you in advance for your contribution to what we expect will be a worthwhile study. Also, if you have any questions regarding this letter or the study, please feel free to contact George Nicholson or Alodia Holierhoek of this Department.

Finally, if you do not wish to complete the questionnaire please do return it to us in the stamped addressed envelope. If you would like to receive a copy of the study when completed, simply indicate this in your response.

Yours truly,

Corwin T. Cambray
Manager, Policy Planning